Israel, PLO to resume talks Dec 5: Israel and the PLO will resume talks on extending Palestinian autonomy on December 5 in Cairo, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said on Monday after meeting PLO chairman Yasser Arafat in Brussels. AFP reports from Jerusalem.

Peres told Israeli radio, the talks would focus on organising Palestinian elections. Israel accepted the principle of international monitoring of the polls, said Peres, who was speaking in Brussels.

Ghali visits Sarajevo today: UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali plans to visit the Bosnian capital Sarajevo on Wednesday. UN sources told Reuters on Monday in Sarajevo.

The sources, who insisted on anonymity, did not disclose the agenda of the UN chief's visit, which coincides with the Serb push on the UN safe area of Bihac town and renewed efforts by the big powers' contact group to win a peace deal for Bosnia.

8 Filipino soldiers killed: Eight members of a military unit who went missing after a clash with Muslim fundamentalists in a southern Philippine island have been found dead in the area, a military official said vesterday, AFP reports from Zamboanga.

The corpses of First Lieutenant Winston Valeros, five troops and two government militiamen were recovered from the site of Sunday's clash in upper Kapayawan village on Basilan Island, Lieutenant General Orlando Soriano told reporters.

Ethiopians demand Islamic law: Over 30,000 Ethiopian Muslims demonstrated in Addis Ababa yesterday demanding Islamic law, Xinhua reports from Addis

The demonstrators demanded that the interests of the Ethiopian Muslims should be represented in a new constitution. The demonstration proceeded peacefully.

IAEA team leaves Pyongyang: A team of officials from the International Atomic Energy Agency left Pyongyang on Tuesday after wrapping up the first round of talks on freezing North Korea's nuclear programme. China's official Xinhua News Agency reported, AP says from Beijing.

During their five-day visit, the IAEA inspectors confirmed that North Korea has suspended its nuclear programme 'under an agreement with the United States, the North's official radio said on Monday.

Belarus to join NATO programme:
Belarus' Security Council decided in a closed session on Monday evening to join NATO's "Partnership for Peace" programme for former East bloc countries, television news in Minsk reported, AP says from Minsk.

There are 23 nations already in the programme, which offers military and political cooperation with the 16-member alliance. Only Tajikistan has not signed on among former Soviet republics.

Japanese meet on gun control: Alarmed by a heavily publicised wave of shootings, Japan's Cabinet held its first special meeting on gun control on Tuesday and agree to strengthen immigration checks for illegal weapons, AP reports from Tokyo.

"The daily life of ordinary citizens, corporate activities and even freedom of the press is being threatened," National Police Agency chief Takaji Kunimatsu said after the meeting.

Videotape of Escobar's death: Nearly. a year after security forces killed drug kingpin Pablo Escobar at his hideout in Medellin, Colombia, a videotape of the raid has surfaced a news magazine reported on Monday, AP reports from Bogota.

The video was shot on December 2, 1993, by a member of the security forces who had a camera in his helmet as the team broke down the door to Escobar's hideout, Semana magazine reported. The weekly said that although it was allowed to view the four-minute video, it was not authorised to reproduce the images.

Namibian polls next week: Namibia, a former German colony and South African protectorate that emerged from bush warfare to become one of Africa's successful states, holds its first election as a free nation next week. AP reports from Windhoek.

Since a 1990 election held under UN supervision before independence from South Africa, former guerillas of the South-West Africa People's organisation have been in power. With opposition parties weak, President Sam Nujoma is expected to gain re-election when some 650,000 voters cast ballots December 7-8 in the elections for president and parliament.

Remains of US MIAs returned: A

US military honour guard on Tuesday solemnly escorted home what are believed to be the remains of six to nine American servicemen killed in the Vietnam War. AP reports from Hanoi.

The remains were recovered by Vietnamese and American teams working together in the latest of a series of joint search operations that began in 1988. The United States has linked improvement of relations with Vietnam to progress in determining the fate of the 1,624 Americans still missing there from the war.

Heavy snowfalls in Tibet: some 3,800 people and 110,000 head of livestock are threatened with starvation following unusually heavy snowfalls in the remote Himalayan region of Tibet, an official report said on Tuesday, AP reports from Beijing.

The government declared Damxung County, about 100 kilometres (63 miles) north of the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, a disaster area after 333,000 hectares (822,510 acres) of grasslands were buried under 50 centimetres (20 inches) of snow, the Xinhua News Agency said.

Giza highway work suspended: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has suspended work on a controversial highway cutting across the Giza pyramids plateau while a study to assess its impact on the ancient monuments is conducted, newspapers said on Monday, Reuter reports from Cairo.

Al Ahram and Al Akhbar dailies said Mubarak ordered work to be stopped on the half-completed road, which UNESCO says violates an international convention protecting the plateau, while the study in in progress

10 die in Chinese mine blast: Ten miners were killed in an explosion at a coal-mine in Jiangsu province, east China, on Thursday, the Jiangsu Daily reported.

APP says from Beijing. Two people were injured in the blast which occurred in Liuxin mine at Xuzhou, said the paper received in Beijing yes-

Belarus Trade Minister sacked: Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko has sacked Trade Minister Valentin Baidak, for corruption, the Interfax news agency reported vesterday quoting the president's office. AFP

reports from Moscow Baidak is accused of having used his influence to allocate two apartments, according to an investigation by the presidential committee in charge of fighting corruption within state bodies

Thai road mishap claims 5: Five European tourists were killed and two seriously injured late on Monday when a van in which they were travelling overturned in northern Thailand, police and hospital officials

said yesterday. Reuter reports from Bangkok Two of the dead were from Spain and one each from Prance, Britain and the Netherlands. Their ages ranged from 21 to 36.

Chechnya rejects Russian Offthe Record ultimatum to lay down arms

GROZNY, Russia, Nov 29: The secessionist government in Russia's embattled Chechnya Republic rejected a Kremlin ultimatum to lay down arms. vowing to fight "to the last drop of blood," a Chechen official said, reports AFP.

"We will fight until the last drop of blood. Chechnya will never return to Russia," Chechnya's Foreign Minister Yussef Shamsedin said in a statement to journalists.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin gave all parties 48 hours, early today, to declare a ceasefire and lay down arms or he would deploy troops in the breakaway oil-rich Caucasus Republic.

Meanwhile AP from Moscow adds: Yeltsin's warning fol-

the Foreign Office on Monday in London.

LONDON, Nov 29: Prime

Minister John Major on Mon-

day rejected an appeal from

Pakistani Prime Minister Be-

mazir Bhutto to intervene on

behalf of Bosnia's Muslims or

to supply them with arms, re-

plained very frankly why he

believed there could be no mil-

itary solution to the conflict." a

spokeswoman at Major's offi-

cial Downing Street residence

would only lead to an escala-

tion of the conflict and jeopar-

dise the humanitarian mis-

sion." said the spokeswoman.

speaking in customary

Bhutto, on her arrival Sun-

"Lifting the arms embargo

"The prime minister ex-

ports AP.

anonymity

lowed intense fighting over the weekend and threats by the president of Chechnya, Dzhokhar Dudayev, to execute about 70 captured Russians. Dudayev later said the Russians would be treated as prisoners of war.

Yeltsin, citing "an extreme danger to stability and peace in our society," demanded that all prisoners be released and that both sides disband all armed formations within 48 hours.

Yeltsin said that unless his demands are met, he will declare a state of emergency in Chechnya, a mostly Muslim republic of 1.2 million people located in southern Russia.

"All forces and resources which are at the disposal of the state will be used to put an

British Prime Minister John Major (L) welcomes Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to

Britain rejects Benazir's plea

to support Bosnian Muslims

day for a weeklong visit to Bri-

tain, criticised Major's refusal

to help arm the Muslim-led

forces of the besieged Bosnian

able to take military action to

prevent Serbian aggression, at

least it should allow the Bosni

ans the right to self-defence."

main contributors to UN forces

in Bosnia, have resisted calls to

increase NATO intervention

and lift the arms embargo, ar-

guing that such actions would

troops on the ground in

Bosnia, backs US calls to allow

the Muslim-led army to

achieve parity of munitions and

Pakistan, which also has

escalate the conflict.

"If the United Nations is not

Britain and France, the

government.

she said.

end to the bloodshed, to defend the life, rights and freedoms of the citizens of Russia and to restore constitutional legality, law and order and peace in the Chechen republic," Yeltsin said.

In the Chechen capital, Grozny, Chechnya's foreign minister told The Associated Press that Yeltsin's threats meant nothing.

"I think he was drunk when he made the ultimatum. Yousef Shamsedin said. When asked whether Dudayev hoped to speak with Yeltsin, Shamsedin replied: "You think he will pray to Yeltsin to take back this ultimatum? Never. He is a Chechen."

Besides, he added, "I expect the Russian will not un-

- AFP photo

heavy weapons with its Bosnian

in their 90-minute talks that

her country was deeply con-

cerned about Bosnia and urged

tougher military action against

the Serbs, especially besieged

Bihac in northwest Bosnia, a

supposed UN-designated "safe

area" now on the verge of be-

ground could not resolve any-

thing or protect the civilian

population,"said a statement

from Major's office in re-

at Oxford University, also dis-

cussed trade during her lunch

Bhutto, who was educated

"Increased use of air power

ing overrun by Serb forces.

Bhutto said she told Major

Serb rivals.

sponse.

with Major.

derstand - they understand only power. I think what happened in Afghanistan will happen in Chechnya, and not only in Chechnya but in the whole Caucasus."

As for the Russian prisoners, he said, "we are free to do what we want to do."

Grozny was calm early Tuesday, with no reports of fighting. An opposition offensive Saturday failed to topple

Moscow sent troops once before, in late 1991, to try to force Chechnya to abandon its independence drive, but pulled back amid fierce popular resistance. Since then, it has maintained a heavy military presence nearby.

Tsar must be buried before Lenin'

MOSCOW, Nov 29: First the Tsar's family must be buried. and then Russia can decide whether to bury Soviet founder Vladimir Lenin, President Boris Yeltsin's chief of staff said Monday, reports AP.

Sergei Filatov's comments to the ITAR-Tass news agency came in response to an appeal by St Petersburg Mayor Anatoly Sobchak that Lenin's body be removed from display in its Red Square mausoleum and buried on January 21, the 71st anniversary of his death.

"The question of burying Lenin will be considered after the reburial of the remains of the Tsar's family," Filatov told ITAR-Tass.

Tsar Nicholas II and his family were secretly executed by Lenin's order in the Ural Mountains in 1918, soon after the Bolshevik Revolution.

222 foreign mercenaries killed in Kashmir since 1989

NEW DELHI. Nov 29: Pakistanis and Afghans top the number of foreign mercenaries fighting Indian rule in the disputed state of Kashmir, torn by a Muslim'separatist drive since 1989, an official report said today, according to AFP.

The figures, released in the state winter capital Jammu. said 222 foreign Islamic rebels had been killed in clashes with Indian security forces between 1989 and October, 1994. of whom 97 were Pakistanis and without adequate troops on the 89 Afghans.

The Press Trust of India news agency said the other recorded deaths were of militants from Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, Sudan and Yemen, who had come to aid the Kashmiri Muslim guerillas in their campaign for seces-

Lankan flood leaves 4 lakh homeless

COLOMBO, Nov 29: Floods triggered by heavy monsoon rains at the weekend have left 400,000 people homeless in Sri Lanka's coastal Batticaloa district, relief officials said today, reports AFP.

The floodwaters' have now begun to recede but most of the 83,000 families affected were undecided about returning to their villages immediately, officials said.

Thousands of people took shelter in temples and makeshift relief centres located on high ground after the floods ravaged about a dozen villages in Batticaloa, said social services director NWE Wijewan-

"Our department is providing them with a week's supply of dry rations and cooked meals," Wijewantha said.

It is the second time in two weeks that the region has been hit by floods.

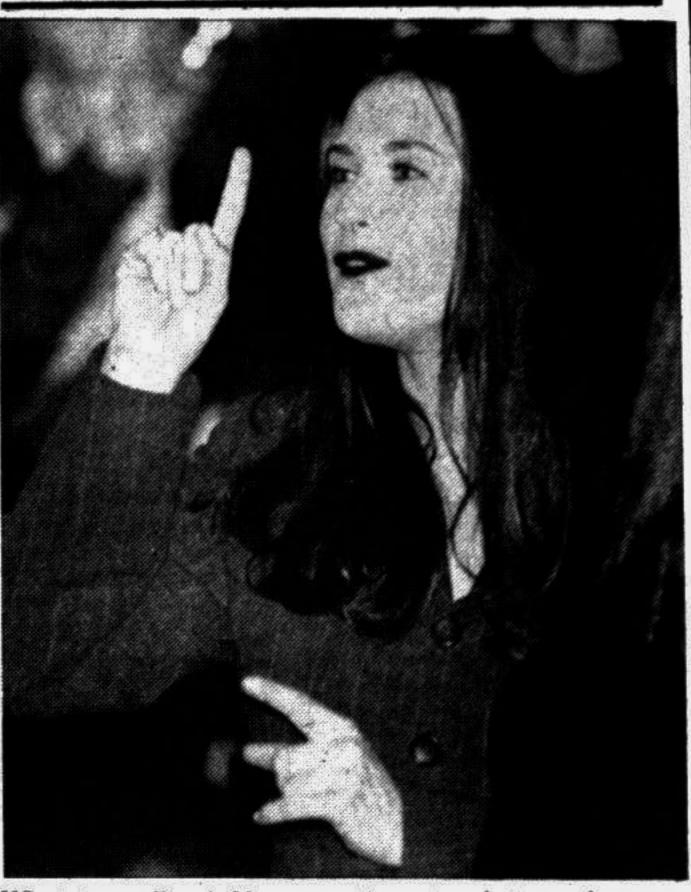
of Eurosceptics could spill over into a formal challenge to

is likely to project a big drop in the government's budget

Instead of the government's

If he can point to a balanced budget by 1997-98, Conserva tive MPs will almost certainly be able to count on tax cuts to restore the party's dismal political fortunes in time for the next election, which must be

But even the glittering prize of tax cuts might not be enough to stop tension over Europe from tearing the Con-



US actress Demi Moore motions to photographers on Monday as she arrives at premiere of the movie "Disclosure" in Los Angeles. Moore stars in the corporate thriller as a boss who sexually harasses an employee, played by Michael Douglas. - AFP photo

Fathers' names invented to conform to city norms

MOSCOW: Thousands of Moscow mothers invent names for the fathers of their newborn children to make the babies' birth certificates conform to city norms, Moskovsky Komsomolets newspaper said yesterday, reports Reuter.

The paper said every fifth baby born in Moscow last year was illegitimate, up from 15 per cent three years ago. A third of the mothers of illegitimate children invented a name for the father.

Illegitimacy has risen in Russia as the strict moral codes of Soviet days gave way to a new era of permissiveness. Poor contraception and a lack of sex education mean more and more babies are born to young, unmarried women.

The article gave no figures for abortion, still the main form of birth control for millions of Russian women. Without high abortion rates, it said the figure for illegitimate births would be much higher.

Cousin slams Charles' lack of remorse LONDON: A second cousin to Prince Charles has joined the

list of royal gripers, slamming the heir to the British throne

for his infidelities and ego, reports AP.

" He doesn't express any remorse for straying from his marital vows, no apologies to his family, his kids, even his wife, "complained Marina Mowatt, 26th in line to the throne. in an interview published Monday.

Mowatt, who is daughter to Princess Alexandra, first cousin to Queen Elizabeth - and Charles' goddaughter to boot - told Hello! magazine that she thought Charles was a publicity hound.

"I just couldn't shrug off the feeling that the ... book (was) all part of Charles's concern for his popularity ratings more than any genuine concern for real people," the magazine Mowatt as saving.

Mowatt, 28, is no stranger to publicity herself. Dubbed the "royal rebel" for her 1990 wedding to a commoner when four months pregnant, she also earned 1991's "rear of the year" award proferred by a British jeans company.

Charles, 45, appeared in good spirits late Monday at London's Doninion Theater, where he met singers Tony Bennett. Shirley Bassey and other celebrities at the 67th annual Royal Variety Performance.

Iranian navy on full alert in the Gulf

TEHRAN, Nov 29: Iran's navy is "fully alert" over the presence of western forces in the Gulf and ready to defend itself in case of attack, a navy commander said in remarks published today, reports AFP.

Rear admiral Abbas Mohtaj, the navy's second-in-command, said 40 Iranian ships were "constantly monitoring the movement of foreign warships in the Persian Gulf. "We are fully alert and are

prepared to defend our territorial waters from foreign invasion," he said, quoted by the English daily Kavhan Interna tional today. Since the end of the 1991

Gulf war. US, British and French forces have staged regular joint manoeuvres with Gulf Arab states.

US and British naval reinforcements were rushed to the Gulf waters after Iraq massed troops near the Kuwaiti border in early October, sparking August 1990 invasion of the Emirate. Iran has repeatedly warned

fears of a repeat of Baghdad's

against the presence of foreign forces in the region.

Mohtaj said meanwhile that Iran had spent around 10 billion dollars on defence in the past five years," a fraction of what the Gulf Arab states had spent over the same period."

Western media "often exaggerates over Iran's defence spending," he said.

Last week the rear admiral warned against "massive" procurement of arms by the Gulf monarchies.

Meanwhile, Washington and its Gulf Arab allies have expressed concern about Iran's arms buildup but Mohtaj said its arms spending was small

compared with neighbouring Saudi Arabia which he said spent 130 billion on arms over the same period.

man Lamont, warned in Mon-

Major saved from humiliating parliamentary defeat Clarke's predecessor. Nor-

- AFP photo

LONDON, Nov 29: Prime Minister John Major was saved from humiliating defeat and a snap election by winning a key vote on Europe, but his par hamentary majority disappeared after a revolt by rightwingers in his Conservative

children suffering from mistreatment.

Major hoped Finance Minis ter Kenneth Clarke could restore morale in his divided party by dangling the prospect of tax cuts in Tuesday's annual budget.

Party: reports Reuter

Clarke led the government fight in parliament on Monday night to ram through a bill which increased Britain's contributions to the European

The government deeply unpopular with voters, had

threatened to call an election if it was defeated, which would almost certainly have ended the Conservatives's 15 year hold on power.

Princess of Wales (L), accompanied by Anne-Aymone Giscard d'Estaing, president of the

Children's Foundation, arrives at the Palace of Versailles, France on Monday to preside an

international gala for children. The event was organised by UNESCO to raise money for

The strong ram tactics worked - Major had a comfortable majority of 33 votes but eight Conservative mem bers of parliament registered their resentment at handing more cash to Brussels by ab staining from the vote.

The government's business managers promptly withdrew the party whip from the rebels - effectively expelling them from the parliamentary party and thus erasing Major's 14-seat majority in the 651seat House of Commons.

Another "Eurosceptic MP. Sir Richard Body, voluntarily resigned to the whip.

The expulsion of the rebels is testimony to the desperate tactics Major is having to use to keep a semblance of control over his fractious party. divided to the core over Eu-

Losing his majority need not spell in the end for Major after four years as prime minister because the dissidents normally vote with the government on issues other than Europe

April.

But he will face a challenge every bit as tough as Monday's Euro-budget vote when the opposition Labour Party tables a motion next Tuesday seeking to block an increase in value added tax (VAT) on domestic fuel due to take effect next

Even before then, the anger

Major's leadership of the party. The deadline for nomina-

tions is midday on Wednesday. Major is hoping that Chancel lor of the Exchequer Clarke, his most likely successor, will be able to ease the pressure by producing a reassuring budget.

Clarke long ago ruled out the tax cuts demanded by Conservative right-wingers nervous about Labour's 25-point lead in opinion polls, indeed he has insisted on going ahead with the increase in VAT on fuel. But with the rapidly ex-

panding British economy spinning off greater-than expected tax revenues, and with docile inflation holding down the government's outlays. Clarke

current forecast of 28 billion

pounds (43.8 billion dollar) in 1995/96, some economists believe Clarke could pencil in a deficits closer to 20 billion pounds (31 3 billion dollars).

held by April 1997.

servatives apart

day's debate that Europe could still split the Conservatives as under and said the party should consider all alternatives including withdrawal from the European Union Another Conservative Eu rosceptic. John Wilkinson, said: "To me, for the Conserva

tive Party this is as climatic a moment as when the anti-appeasers stood their ground over Munich in 1938. He added: "It seems to me

that the government bows down and appeases Brussels all the way along the line And the danger is that. like Neville Chamberlai (prime minister in 1938). Major will be swept away from office.